

**[0063]** The input device, in response to user input, provides one or more input signals, position data, and pressure data to the controller. As the controller monitors the input device, it first detects whether or not an input signal is being generated by the input device 48. If an input signal is being generated, the controller obtains the input signal 49 associated with the input device. The controller then detects if the same input device is generating any position data 50. If position data is being generated, the controller obtains the position data 51 associated with the input device. The controller also detects if the same input device is generating any pressure data 52. If pressure data is being generated, the controller obtains the pressure data 53 associated with the input device. The controller may detect and obtain the three types of data in any order. Preferably, the controller, while obtaining the data, maintains an association among the input device, the input signal, the pressure data, and the positions data. In some embodiments, the input signal includes pressure data, or data from which the pressure applied to the input device may be calculated, position data, or a combination of pressure and position data.

**[0064]** Having obtained the input data from the input device, or from a plurality of input devices, the controller then accesses a memory device 54 in which is stored at least one database containing information necessary to produce the desired function in the electronic device and the predetermined tactile sensation in an input device, and accesses this information 55. In one embodiment, this information is in the form of associations among the detected input data, the functions of the electronic device or apparatus, and the tactile sensations. An exemplar group of associations is represented in tabular form in Fig. 9.

**[0065]** As is shown in the table, for any given input device, a plurality of combinations of input signals, position data, and pressure data is possible, and each combination relates to a specified function of either the electronic device or a distinct tactile sensation. These combinations vary depending on the type of input device assigned to each input signal and the current functionality of that input device. The controller, using the data obtained from monitoring the input device, reads the table and obtains the associated function and tactile feedback information.

**[0066]** Referring to Fig. 9, in one embodiment, a controller monitors input device number 5. On subsequent monitoring passes, the controller does not detect either an input signal or position data, but detects a distinct pressure, Pressure 1. Based upon the information in the table associated with Pressure 1, the controller obtains the associated function information for selecting the number "2", and information for distinct tactile Sensation 13. The controller delivers the function information to the electronic device 70 which uses that information to display the number "2" or to indicate that the number "2" has been selected. The controller uses the information for distinct tactile Sensation 13 to produce Sensation 13 in an input device 56, by for example, causing an actuator to cause the input device to vibrate at a frequency associated with Sensation 13.

**[0067]** On a later monitoring pass, the controller detects a pressure magnitude of pressure 3 on input device number 5. Similarly, based upon the information in the table associated with Pressure 3, the controller obtains the associated function information for selecting the letter "B" and information

for distinct tactile Sensation 15. The controller delivers the function information to the electronic device which uses that information to display the letter "B" or to enter the letter "B" in a program such as a telephone keypad. Therefore, in response to the detection of at least two distinct pressures applied to the input devices, the controller has produced at least two distinct tactile sensations in the input device number 5. The controller can also detect a plurality of distinct pressures applied to input device number 5 and can produce a plurality of distinct tactile sensations in input device 5, each tactile sensation related to one of the plurality of distinct pressures. Although illustrated for a single input device, the controller can detect two distinct pressures for a plurality of input devices and can produce at least two distinct tactile sensations in each one of these input devices. In another embodiment, the controller can detect a plurality of distinct pressures in the plurality of input devices and produce a plurality of distinct tactile sensations in the plurality of input devices. The distinct pressures can represent either discrete pressures or a range of applied pressure.

**[0068]** In another embodiment, the controller monitors input device number 3, which is capable of inputting a plurality of input signals, Inputs 2A-E, to the apparatus. Each input signal corresponds to a distinct pressure applied to input device number 3, Pressures 1-5. Each input signal and pressure corresponds to a distinct function and a distinct tactile sensation, Sensations 5-9. In one embodiment, each input signal corresponds to an alphanumeric character. In this embodiment, the controller delivers function information to the electronic device related to displaying the proper alphanumeric character on an output device associated with the electronic device. Alternatively, the controller can display the associated alphanumeric character directly on the output device.

**[0069]** Referring still to Fig. 9, in another embodiment of a method according to the present invention, the controller monitors input device number 1 and detects a first pressure being applied on a first location on input device number 1. Preferably, input device number 1 is a touchpad input device. In one embodiment, the first pressure is a discrete pressure, pressure 1. In another embodiment, the first pressure represents a range of pressures having a value less than Pressure 1. The function associated with the first applied pressure indicates that this is the pressure range associated with a user simply searching or feeling for the location of the desired button or key. Therefore, the controller does not provide a function input to the electronic device. The controller does, however, provide a first tactile sensation, Sensation 1, to input device number 1.

**[0070]** The controller then detects an input signal, Input 1 and a pressure greater than or equal to Pressure 1 at Input 1. In response, the controller delivers a function input corresponding to "Select" to the electronic device and produces a second distinct tactile sensation, Sensation 2, in Input Device 1.

**[0071]** In another embodiment, the controller monitors Input Device 7 and detects a first pressure, Pressure 1, at a first location, Location 1 on the input device. Preferably, the input device is a touchpad input device. In response, the controller provides a first tactile sensation, Sensation 20, in Input Device 7. In addition, the controller detects a second pressure, Pressure 2, applied at a second location, Location